

Breakfast

SALVATION

Dinner

SANCTIFICATION

Supper

GLORIFICATION

and

My Life Story

— By —

Rev. John W. Groce

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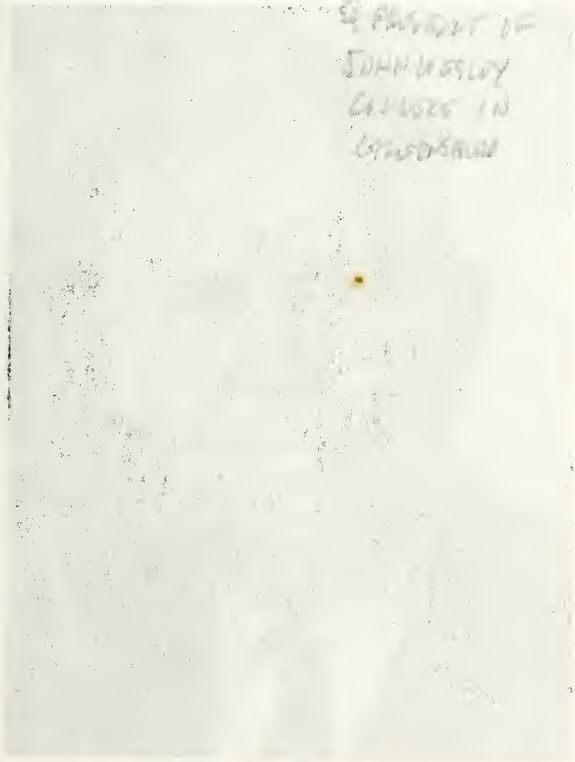
BUSINESS METHODIST

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JOHN W. BROWN A MINISTER IN NC

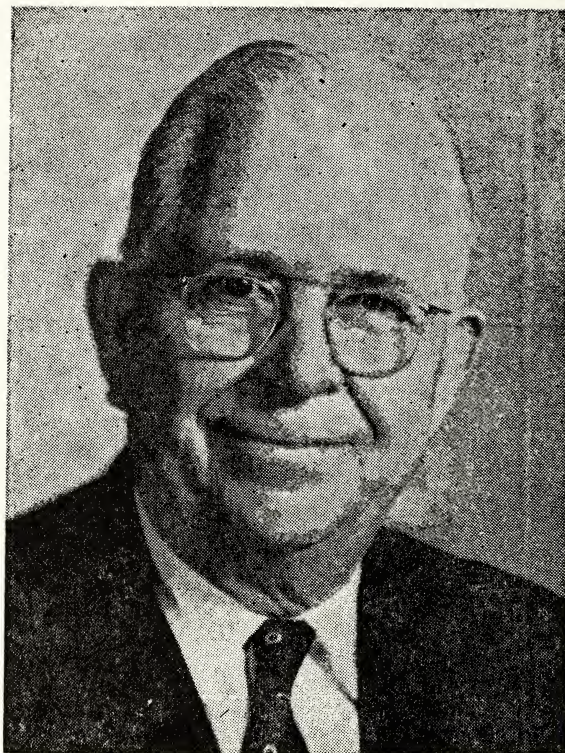
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SEPARATE OF
JOHN W. BROWN
CHURCH IN
GREENSBORO



JOHN W. BROWN

T H E A U T H O R







REV. JOHN W. GROCE



DEDICATION

IN MEMORY OF MY DAUGHTER, RUTH, AND
TO MY SIX LIVING CHILDREN, WHO
WERE BROUGHT UP IN METHODIST
PARSONAGES AND SHARED WITH
ME IN MY JOYS AND SORROWS.







PREFACE

Some of my close friends from time to time have suggested that I should write the story of my life and put it in book form. After I was elected President of People's Bible College (now John Wesley College) I was supposed to write an article for the People's Herald each month. I decided I would write a chapter in the "Story of My Life" each month. The Editor, Rev. K. E. Temple said he would be glad to run it in the People's Herald. Here it is in the book.

I pray it will be a help to all who read it, and a real blessing to many.

His and yours,



JOHN W GROCE.





Foreword

By John R. Church



The first poem that I ever memorized opened with the following lines:

Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing leave behind us,
Foot-prints on the sands of time.

I feel that these lines would be true of the life of Rev. John W. Groce. In the eyes of the world he might not be classed as a great man, but I feel sure that when the records of heaven are opened, that his life will stand far above many of those that the world counted great. The life of John W. Groce has proven to be a blessing to a great host of people, and he has left some spiritual monuments that will live on after he is dead and gone. His influence on the lives of many people that he served as pastor, still lives on and will live on for years to come. In the cities of High Point and Greensboro, North Carolina, he has left lasting monuments: in such institutions as John Wesley Camp and John Wesley College, as well as in such churches as Oak View, Ward Street and others that he helped to establish and build along spiritual lines. He was one of the prime movers in helping to build and establish the great John Wesley Camp Meet-

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ing. For many years he was president of the camp, and has contributed more than many people will ever know, until the books are opened on the other side.

Brother Groce was not great by birth, nor by natural gifts, but he has lived a great life, because there came a time when he saw the need of salvation from sin. He gave his heart and life to Christ, and became a new creation in Christ. Later on he came to see the need of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, in His Sanctifying power. He sought and received this glorious experience, and has been a great champion of this Bible, Wesleyan truth down through the years. There are many of our Methodist preachers that are afraid to preach this great truth, for fear it will make them unpopular, but it is my honest convictions that Brother John W. Groce would have never gone very far with the Lord, if he had not accepted this truth. Years ago an old Methodist preacher up in New York State said to me, "Son, you honor the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will honor you." I have found this to be true in my own life, and I feel sure that Brother Groce would witness to the same in his own life and ministry.

Bro. Groce has not only made a great contribution to the cause of Christ in his public ministry, but I think one of his greatest contributions has been through the wonderful family of children that he and his wife have given to the world. It must be a source of satisfaction to him to know that

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God is using his family in such a wonderful way.

I am glad that he has seen fit to write out a record of his life, and the way God has blessed and used him, and I hope that as many read it, it will be a great inspiration to them. I hope it will have a wide circulation. It gives me great pleasure to be able to write this foreword to this book, for I consider Rev. John W. Groce as one of my very best friends. I rejoice in the way God has blessed and used him. May his tribe increase.

Sincerely His and yours,

JOHN R. CHURCH.

A SERMON

Breakfast, Dinner and Supper

Exodus 3:17. "I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto a land flowing with milk and honey."

Yes, I believe in first, second and third blessing.

1. Salvation	2. Sanctification	3. Glorification
Breakfast	Dinner	Supper

The children of Israel in Egypt were made slaves by the new governor. They were under task-masters, and were driven and beaten with a lash by the task-masters. Moses was born under the sentence of death, but God had a job for him to do so he took care of Moses.

While he was watching or herding his father-in-law's flock, God appeared to him in a burning bush. The bush was not consumed. God told Moses to take off his shoes for he was on Holy Ground. The children of Israel in Egypt were crying to God for help. God said to Moses, "I have seen the afflictions of my people which are in Egypt and have heard their cry." Praise God! He is merciful and hears and answers prayer.

God told Moses He wanted him to lead the

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children out of Egypt, assuring him that He would be with him.

Egypt is a type of sinful life, the taskmasters were types of the world, sin, and the devil. Every sinner is in bondage with taskmasters over him. I thank God that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world (John 3:16) of sin to free us from bondage and burdens of Sin. I remember when I cried for mercy. God for Christ sake freed me from shackles of sin.

This is what I called my breakfast, the crossing of the Red Sea, conversion, and being washed in the blood of Christ. I felt like everyone else when first saved. I felt like I could make it all the way to heaven. But not long after I was saved I found that I was weak and needed something I didn't have. I found myself with Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans, where some people live, not knowing there is anything better for them. Paul did not stay in the seventh chapter but got over into the eighth chapter. I thank God I heard the Gospel of full Salvation. I had been saved but the Old Man, the Adamic nature or the original inherited sin was still there and there was trouble on the inside. As Paul said, "When I would do good, evil was present." God did not mean for the children of Israel to linger in the wilderness but they did. God had provided for them to go on across Jordan into the land of Canaan, the land that

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flowed with milk and honey I thank God for the day I crossed Jordan and got into the land of Canaan. This I called dinner, Sanctification. I yielded my will to God's will, making a complete consecration. The altar sanctified the gift. The Old Man was crucified; there was victory within.

You may ask are there no more temptations or giants to overcome. Yes, the tempter will come, but there is nothing on the inside to respond to anything he has to offer. Every victory won just puts you further into the land that flows with milk and honey. I crossed the river of Jordan over forty years ago and the further I go the better it gets. The air is fresh, the water is pure, and the grapes are delicious. The Honey flows. Praise the Lord, I feel like Uncle Buddy Robinson when he said, "Bless God I am so happy I feel like I am sitting on the moon and the honey dripping from between my ribs."

When I reach my Heavenly home by the Grace of God, I hope to sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb, which will be my third meal. Glorification.

May I ask you, dear reader, "Where are you? Are you in Egypt? Or have you been born again, washed in the blood, crossed the Red Sea?"

"Are you between the Red Sea and Jordan? (The state of double-mindedness, having battles with the carnal nature?) Have you all on the altar laid?

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Have you been Sanctified? Have you had your dinner? Are you living in Canaan, the Land that flows with Milk and Honey? Are you ready for Supper—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb?

M E E T M E T H E R E ! !

J. W. G.

CHAPTER 1

Date And Place Of Birth

Today is December 12, 1959. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit I am about to write a brief story of my life.

First of all, I want to give my testimony. I was saved in my early teens, I don't remember the month, the day, or the week, or the hour of the day, but thank God I do remember the place. I will tell you more about it further on in this chapter. Soon after I was saved I was called to preach. I disobeyed God and backslid. Several years later I was reclaimed. In 1918 I was sanctified, another experience I shall never forget nor cease to thank God for. I did not realize at the time what it was or what had happened to me, but I thank God that when we meet the condition, put ourselves on the altar without reservation, God sanctifies us. One of my favorite verses is Phillipians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus." This has been true in my life as well as in the lives of all who love the Lord.

I was born August 15, 1888. There were two boys and three girls older than myself. There were two younger girls in our family. My parents lived in South Carolina in the upper part of Greenville

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County on the farm. My father was a cotton farmer. We raised cotton, corn, wheat, and the necessities of the home. We bought very little from the store. Our home was five miles from Greer, South Carolina, a small town, and fifteen miles from Greenville, South Carolina, a much larger town. I thank God that I was born and raised in a Christian home. This is a great privilege and the child that has this as a background has a great deal to be thankful for.

My father came up during the war and had very little schooling, but he and my mother knew the Lord. As early as I can remember we had the family altar in the home. Our home was a humble but a happy one. My oldest brother, who is a retired minister now, could lead the singing. My oldest sister, who went to heaven some years ago, could play the organ. In the evening and on Sunday afternoon the family would gather in the parlor, Mother, Father, and the children. Sister would play, brother would lead the singing, my father and mother and the children would make a joyful noise unto the Lord. I suppose this is what we mean when we speak of the "good old days!" Our home was a preacher's home. I was taught to respect the preacher and I did not complain or whine as I waited while the preacher was eating the best part of the chicken. It was the only thing I knew to do. My parents did not send me to church and Sunday

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School. No, rather, they went themselves and took me and the other children with them and where they sat, we sat. I knew when Sunday came that I was going to Sunday School.

We had preaching only once a month. It was about two miles from our home to the church where my parents belonged and we attended regularly. We had various ways of transportation: a buggy, the wagon, the carriage, horseback, and many times we walked. Sometimes, especially in the summer-time, we boys went bare-footed. When there was preaching in other churches or revivals within a radius of five miles of our home we would often go in the wagon to the services. My father always had time to go to church. He was never too busy even with the farm work that we could not stop in time to go to night services and to the services on the week-end, all of which I am also thankful for. My father went to heaven about 40 years ago. About all the life I knew him he was a deacon in the Baptist church where he belonged.

I remember on one occasion when he was passing his hat, receiving the offering in the church. There was one of our leading members or one of the wealthiest members of the church sitting on the front seat. My father was a small man and he walked or moved rather fast, and he passed the hat swiftly before the people on the front pew. This man, holding his offering rather tightly, reach-

ed out and was a little late in turning it loose. It missed the hat and both the pennies rolled toward the pulpit.

In my early boyhood, my Sunday School teacher was a godly man. He taught us the Word and the truth that is taught in the Word. Since our church and home was in the country, we had no paved roads. We always had our revivals in the summer time. Our pastor was a good man who also preached the word of God plainly.

During one of our revivals I was convicted of sin. This was in my early teens. I realized that I was lost and if I died in that condition my soul would be lost in hell. Yes, I believe there is a hell. The Bible teaches it, Jesus preached it and had more to say Himself about eternal punishment than He did about heaven and eternal life.

One night when penitents were called I made my way to the mourners' bench, heavy-loaded with sin. And as I bowed there with my father on one side and my Sunday School teacher on the other I did not know how to pray, but I knew that they were praying for me and that God heard their prayers. I asked God to have mercy upon me, a sinner, and God for Christ's sake forgave me. I was happy. I felt the burden roll away. My soul was light. I'm quite sure that the song leader was leading that song, "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light." It blesses my soul

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yet every time I hear it sung. I'm so glad that I have been born again and my sins are under the blood. It is true that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son That whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have eternal life." The WHOSOEVER included me. I'm glad that I got in.

CHAPTER II

My Call To Preach

Soon after I was converted I felt the call to preach. I have never doubted it. I remember the time and the place. I was in the cotton patch with one of my sisters picking cotton. The call was plain, but I did not even tell my sister or anyone else. Here is where I made a serious mistake. Many others have made the same mistake. I had Christian parents, as I have previously told you. My Pastor would have been interested in my call if I had let it be known. My parents would have been delighted to know that I had had the call and would have been willing to send me to school and college to prepare for it, but I kept it a secret. I didn't want anyone to know, though I was sure of the call.

My brother, who was three years older than I, left home and went to work in town. My father was getting old and this left me with the farming to do. Every row was mine to plow and then go back and hoe. I did not enjoy this. I enjoyed plowing but I did not like to work alone and do all the work in that way. My brother-in-law, who had worked in Spartanburg, South Carolina, took me with him on a trip to Spantanburg. The man for whom he had worked told me he would give me a job if I was interested in coming there to

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work, with a beginning wage of ten cents an hour, working about twelve hours a day. This was big money for that day and time. I had been working on the farm for fifty cents a day from sun to sun. The temptation was too great for me. It was cotton picking time. I went back home and did not even tell my father about that. I went out looking for someone to gather the crop so that I could go and take the job. I found a colored boy who agreed to work for five dollars a month, and board. I brought him home with me and then told my father why I had brought him and put him in charge of the boy to do the work.

I got my brother-in-law to take me back to the city and I went to work, but there, thought I had left a Christian home and left that Christian influence, I put up at a boarding house where I found evil men associates. In fact, the lady with whom I was boarding put me in the room with her own son. I did not realize it for a long time, but finally found out that he was a gambler. He would lie in bed and smoke and come in at all hours of night. Of course, he had money to spend. I did not run with him, but it was evil company.

Then on the job where I worked there were unsaved and wicked people profaning the name of God, going the way of the world. I soon lost my Christian experience. I thank God that I had been raised in a Christian home; though I had gone back on God I did not get so far that I did not feel the

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pull and the urge and was conscious of my mother's and father's prayers, and as the poet has put it, "My mother's prayers have followed me."

I was raised to go to church and Sunday school and I continued to do so. I didn't know anything else. Because of this experience, I have warned young people through my ministry, of the danger of leaving a Christian home, going into a wicked city, and associating with worldly people.

I visited home as often as I could and of course always found a hearty welcome. In fact, my father told me when I left home that it was my home and any time I wanted to come back I was welcome. Though I was not making much, I was trying to save some money. Having been raised poor I didn't know anything else. I had not had spending money to throw away. I had been taught the value of a dollar.

I was conscious all the time of my call to preach, though I was not living a Christian life. I was running from God like Jonah, wanting my own way, going the way of least resistance, doing what I wanted to do instead of what God wanted me to do. May I say here and now, as I have said many, many times from the pulpit and to young people, you can't outrun God. And if God calls a boy to preach or a girl to the mission field they will never make a success or be happy at anything else that they may try to do. I am sure that God has a

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plan for every life and the sooner that a young person finds what God's will is for him and begins to work toward it to prepare himself for it the better and happier he is.

CHAPTER III

Courtship And Marriage

At the age of twenty-one I went into business with a first cousin of mine in Greenville, South Carolina. It seemed that we were prospering and business was fine for a time. I bought a home and my own transportation. The Lord blessed even though I was running from Him, seemingly making a success. Time went on.

I was so busy in the business of trying to make a success that I had little time to think about the girls. However, in 1911 I met a young lady. Soon after getting acquainted with her I knew that she was the one for me. We were married on Sunday, February 11, 1912. I went back to my business on Monday morning. It was not nearly as much trouble and expense to get married in those days as it is now. If it had been I never could have made it.

My wife, before marriage, was Margaret Lorena Williamson of Forrest City, North Carolina. She was raised in a Christian home. Her parents were Methodist and she was a Christian and belonged to a Methodist church also. I was raised in a Baptist home and was a member of the Baptist church.

Soon after we were married we rented an apartment and started housekeeping. We were happy indeed together. On October 17, 1913, our first baby

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was born. We named her after her mother, Margaret Lorena. I did not realize until then that a baby brought a man and wife even closer together than before. It was a tie that seemed to bind tighter the union. I had seen so many families where the mother belonged to one church and the father to another. The children did not know which one to join, not wanting to hurt the feelings of either, and in some cases they did not join any church, even though they had made a profession of faith. As I thought upon this and weighed it, I realized the thing that we needed to do was to belong to the same church. I must say that my wife was a better Methodist than I was a Baptist, or a better Christian than I was. I decided to join the Methodist church with her.

Those were the horse and buggy days, I had a good horse and a good rubber tired buggy. In fact it was while taking a ride in the buggy that we were engaged. Again, let me say that is what we call the "good old days!"

Home life was so different then to what it is now. The family enjoyed being together at night and on Sunday, and going to church together. There were not so many attractions and other things to entertain and to take us away from each other. We enjoyed the home life.

Fighting the call to preach, I went on in business feeling now that the responsibilities were so

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great I could not obey the call. On December 18, 1914, our second baby was born, a boy. We named him Walter Powe. My middle name is Walter and Powe was our physician's name who was a near friend to the family. Now we had a pair, a girl and a boy. Happy? Yes!

In 1914, World War I was on and we began to have business reverses. Business was bad, collections were dull. We had in our organization three men and a bookkeeper besides my cousin and myself. Before we realized it we weren't taking in enough in a week to pay off on Saturday night. We had to close shop. It took everything I and my cousin had, our homes and the business. Here I was with a family, no business and broke. God was still dealing. May I say here that I did not realize at the moment that this was the best thing that had ever happened to me for it was because of this that I surrendered to God and accepted the call into the ministry.

CHAPTER IV

Running From God

I must confess that there was a time when I was discouraged; the air castles I had built for myself and my family had been blown to pieces. The future was dark all because I had gotten my eyes off of God. It was the work of the devil to get me discouraged. On August 2, 1916, our third child was born, a girl. We named her Ruth. I was having a struggle trying to support my family and make ends meet. The Lord was still dealing with me. I realized that I was still a young man and God was still on the Throne. This prodigal returned and found the loving, Heavenly Father, anxiously awaiting his return. He received me, placed the kiss of forgiveness upon my cheek, the robe of righteousness on my back, the ring of love on my finger, the shoes of salvation on my feet, and killed the fatted calf. The joy and peace I had in my heart was far greater than the worldly things that I had possessed or may I say the things that had possessed me.

In the fall of 1916, after I got a job in Charlotte, North Carolina, I moved my family from Greenville, South Carolina to Charlotte. I went to work determined to start all over again. Soon after moving we transferred our church membership to Dilworth Methodist Church. Rev. Burge Abernathy was our

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pastor, a loving Christian gentleman who was a friend to his flock. I was soon put on the board of stewards, then appointed as teacher of the boy's class in Sunday School. I began tithing. I was happy in the service of the Lord and was doing what I thought was my best. I was still not where God wanted me, but I felt that I couldn't get there now. To think of going back to school and preparing for the ministry was a giant that I was afraid of. It was the devil that made me feel that way. It is amazing how he works to keep one from yielding to the whole will of God. I was having battles on the inside. I had not been delivered from the carnal nature. I was in the wilderness state, God had called me into the land of Canaan but I was living in the wilderness in fear of the giants of Canaan.

I was like the ten spies that said, "It couldn't be done," forgetting that though the devil is powerful, God is all powerful and that with Him all things are possible. It is foolish for anyone to try to run from God. It is written in the Book "Him that the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "Yes, I "Jonahed" on God, went my own way instead of God's way. I had already paid the fare with everything of worldly material that I had possessed. I will tell you in the next chapter my experience with the whale and my full surrender to God.

CHAPTER V

My Surrender To Call Of God

As long as we are human we will make mistakes. As I closed the last chapter I said I would tell you in the next chapter my experience with the whale.

Yes, I was running from God as I have found many others doing in my ministry. After I had paid the fare and got on the boat, for a time there was smooth sailing, but soon contrary winds began to blow. The tide was high, the sea of life was anything but smooth. We were having trials, sickness and difficulties; battles on every hand.

On August 3, our baby, Ruth, was **two** years and one day old, as sweet and lovely as **any** flower that ever bloomed in our home. Her Mother called very early in the morning and said that Ruth was sick. I got up. Her face was swollen, I called our family physician. He examined her and shook his head. He said he wanted to get a baby specialist, that he did **not** understand the case. I said, "Surely, get anything that is necessary." I was overboard. I knew God was dealing with me. The baby specialist came, he examined our little Ruth and said she had scarlet fever. All I can tell you is where there is life there is hope. Then he said, "Can you get a nurse immediately?"

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I said, "Yes, there is one across the street, a good one." He wrote a prescription and said, "Get it filled. Have your nurse to give exactly as prescribed and to stay with her and to give her hot baths every so often. It is our only hope, if this fails, there is nothing else we can do."

The whale had me. We got the nurse. We got the medicine. It was given as prescribed. The hot baths were applied. About six o'clock in the afternoon I was prostrate on the floor, in another room not praying for little Ruth but for myself. Truly, I could say with the poet, it's not my preacher, nor my brother, nor my sister, but it's me, it's me, Oh, God, standing in the need of prayer. I was telling God that I was ready to make a fool of myself if need be for His sake. I was crying as if I were out in the deep, yielding, saying one eternal yes to God. When the nurse came to tell me the baby was sinking fast, I was making a complete consecration.

I went into the room where my baby, Ruth, her mother, and the nurse were. I was speechless. Death had come and entered, uninvited, in spite of all the doctor, the nurse, my wife and I could do. I have told it many times for the glory of God and warned young people, "please don't let God have to deal with you as He did with me to get you to go and to do His will." In a few moments little Ruth was gone, but I had the Comforter whom Jesus

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had promised before He went away.

Since little Ruth had the scarlet fever we had to put her in a copper-lined casket. We were quarantined and could not go to the cemetery. I was not only willing but determined by the help of God to carry His message in the Name of Jesus to the lost and dying world, I have wondered many times, yea, many times, and asked God why He ever called me. I felt so weak and so unworthy and yet I knew I had the call and I know that God did not make mistakes. Many times when I felt that I had made a failure, I would think of a little boy with his loaves and fishes and how when he offered them willingly that Jesus brake them, gave thanks and fed the multitudes, then I would hide away and say, "Dear God, take the feeble efforts that I put forth and bless them and feed the multitude," and I have seen hundreds, yea, thousands bow at an altar of prayer and surrender to God. Many accepted Jesus for their first time, others, who had backslidden, came back to God, and many others who had never heard the full gospel, put themselves on the altar, made a full surrender, a complete consecration without reservation on the altar of God as a Living Sacrifice where God sanctified them wholly.

Today there are many preachers in the field, some on the mission field, some at home, here and there, that were saved through my feeble efforts

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and called of God. But, oh, the thing that has grieved me many times, when I have remembered and thought of the time that was wasted and that during the time that I wasted, many, many souls were lost, many others who might have been called to preach would not because I failed God. Soon after this, I will begin to write of my ministry. I will be telling you some of the experiences I had and the joy that has been mine in trying to do the will of God.

CHAPTER VI

Back To School

On April 14, 1921, my wife died and left me with two children. In August of the same year I moved to Rutherford College to further my education. When school opened in September my two children entered the elementary school there and I entered college. The annual conference met in October. Rev. W. F. Elliott was the pastor of the Rutherford College Charge with six churches. The conference gave him the authority to select an assistant from the ministerial body. He called me and said he wanted me to pastor Friendship and Warlicks Chapel churches that conference year. One of them paid me \$200 and the other \$100 during the year. I had a Model T. I sent the two children to school and went to school myself five days a week and preached on Sunday. I did the cooking, washing and ironing, milking and churning. The rest of the time? There wasn't any. The Lord blessed us with good health and I enjoyed it because I knew I was in the Lord's will.

My Second Marriage

On October 17, 1922, I was married to Grace Tate of Ellenboro, North Carolina. We went to annual conference for our honeymoon. At the close of the conference we were assigned to the Bald

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Creek charge, which only had eight preaching places. They were not all churches. There were two school houses, one union church and five Methodist churches. The roads were so bad in the winter I parked the car in the barn and got a horse to ride to my appointments and do my pastoral visiting. I enjoyed that too. I had some amusing experiences on this charge. Some of them I would not dare mention. One of my stewards came to see me one day and wanted me to pray for him, said he didn't know what he had done, but all his sheep were dying and he knew it was something. His daughter ran away and married a fellow he didn't like and he wouldn't let them come home.

I went to District conference. When I got back he met me at the railway station in Burnsville and let me ride his mule 10 miles from there home. Said he wouldn't charge me anything but I could give him credit for \$2 on his quarterage. One of my other stewards who had a big farm and a good team of horses went out in the community and gathered up produce such as dried pumpkin, canned blackberries, molasses, wheat, corn, fat back, etc., brought it to the parsonage and had me to give each member credit for it at or above market price and to give him credit for \$2 for bringing it. When I was raising some money in his church for a worthy cause he said, "I will give a quart of molasses." Well, that was in the good old days.

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From this charge I moved to Sandy Mush charge, twelve miles from Asheville. Here I had five churches and no parsonage. The pastor before me was a single man and didn't need a parsonage. We built a parsonage after I got there on the Old Turkey Creek Camp Ground. I was out visiting my members when one of the best members on the work was talking about how bad his church needed a revival. I said, "Well, we are going to have one this year." He said, "I will have to see it before I believe it." I said, "We will pray for one and God answers prayer." He says, "Yes, I will pray, but I will have to see it before I believe it, for we haven't had one in fifteen years." He taught a Sunday School class and if I was looking toward him when I finished the benediction I would see him bite off the corner of a plug of Brown's Mule chewing tobacco. Bless his heart, I loved him and he loved me.

I visited one of my stewards in the field one day. I did not want to ask him for money but we were about out of food and all out of money. So I asked him if he had any meat for sale. He said no, he had already sold all he had to spare. He asked me if I needed any potatoes. I told him I had potatoes that I had raised. He said, "Well, I thought if you needed any I had some little ones I would give you, or some better ones I would sell you." He said, "You know this has been the hard-

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est year my wife and I have had since we married. We have bought a new car and a new tractor and built a new dairy barn and paid cash for them and we just haven't had money to pay the preacher." I guess he soon forgot my visit and our conversation. Some time after that I was visiting him in his home. He said, "Brother Groce, I had bad luck with my meat. I lost two of the biggest hams I had." I could not say what I thought but if I had it would have been this: "If you had given me one of them the other one would have kept. Bless his heart I loved him, and I hope he loved me. Those were the good old days and I enjoyed them.

My wife was sick the most of that year. The five churches paid me \$800 for the year. I didn't complain. I had some good folks who loved us and they gave us a lot of produce, fresh meat, etc.

CHAPTER VII

Sandy Mush To Weaverville Circuit

After two years on the Sandy Mush Charge, we were transferred to the Weaverville Circuit, where again I had eight churches. I took some extra work at Weaver College. There were a number of ministerial students there so I used some of them at my churches between my regular appointments. They called me their Bishop. It was good for them and for the churches. Soon after moving to this work they raised my salary to twelve hundred dollars a year. That was \$100.00 a month. While out making pastoral calls I drove back up a cove about as far as the road was trimmed out at that time to visit a couple of my older members. While I was visiting this dear brother he asked me when I was going to visit him. I said: "That is what I am doing now." He said, "I don't count these pop calls a visit, I want you to come and spend the day and night with me."

In one of the churches on this charge there were three sand box spittoons sitting under the seats in front of where three of the members sat. I didn't say anything but I got there one Sunday before anyone else. There was a good fire going in the old wood stove. I quietly lifted the top lid of the

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stove and dropped the three boxes, sand and all, in the stove. Of course they were missed but no one said anything about them. I am sure I didn't. They were not replaced. While holding a meeting in this church the day congregations were very small. One morning one of the members was there who would get the news so quickly and spread it so fast they did not need a newspaper in that community, for the news would be old before the paper came out. I thought I preached straight to her that morning but after the service she said to me, "That was a wonderful sermon. I know one woman who needed it, I wish she had been here to hear it." Some folks are so liberal they will give a sermon away even though they need it worse than the one they give it to. We had many good friends on this work that meant much to our lives. It was a field of opportunity. The best of all was, God was with us and blessed our feeble efforts. Praise His Dear Name.

CHAPTER VIII

Weaverville To East Flat Rock

At our Annual Conference in October, 1927, we were transferred from the Weaverville Circuit to the Fletcher Flat Rock Charge. Here I only had three churches, Fletcher, East Flat Rock and Balfour. The parsonage was at East Flat Rock next door to the church. The school house was just across the street from the parsonage where our two children went to school. We found one of the first things we had to do was to get the Fletcher congregation together on a site to build a much needed new church. Five sites were suggested and offered by different ones. I got the consent of the congregation to get a disinterested committee of three to come and look over the sites and decide which one would be the best suited. This was done and they decided the most logical place would be in the village of Fletcher. Immediately I began raising money and pledges for the new church. On November 13, 1928, our first child was born to our second marriage, and we named him William Wilbur. He is now a Wesleyan Methodist preacher. When he was three months old he had pneumonia and came near dying, but God answered prayer, and spared his life to preach the gospel.

I had some wonderful experiences on this work, some of them I can never forget, in visiting and getting acquainted with my members, many of whom I had met at church, but did not know them as families. I called at the home of one of my officials, whom I had met and learned where he lived, and was met at the door by a young lady. I asked her if her father was at home. She said, "You mean my husband." I was told of another home in which I was to visit that the lady of the house looked like a little girl. So when I saw her coming to the door I said to myself, "That's her all right." I spoke and said, "Is this Mrs. So and So?" She said, "No, I am her mother." Soon after moving to this charge our son Walter began to comb his hair and shine his shoes before going to school each morning without being told, which was unusual. When asked why, he said, "I have got me a girl over there." I knew then he was just a chip off the old block. One of our fine young ladies was getting married, and asked me to perform the ceremony. After having the witnesses sign the marriage license I went back to the parsonage to finish filling out the license to mail to the Register of Deeds. I noticed they had been secured in another county. I rushed back to the home, called the bridegroom out and told him what had happened. To keep it from being known and to meet the requirements of the law we decided to

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go for a ride across the county line, get some more witnesses and do it over again. We stopped at a store across the line. I told the merchant I had a couple who wanted to get married. He said, "Tell them to come in. My wife and I ran away when we got married." I made it as short as possible to make it legal. When the bride got back in the car she remarked, "Well, I guess I am married now!" I hope they lived happily ever thereafter. I had many friends on that charge whose memory I cherish. We also had a rich ministry. I expect to meet many souls in heaven that were saved, reclaimed or sanctified under my ministry here. I have been back to two of the churches for revivals since I left the charge. We completed the Fletcher church and built new Sunday School rooms at East Flat Rock during our two year stay there. In addition to my own work as pastor, I held quite a few revivals. God blessed my feeble efforts by using the little loaves and fishes to feed the multitudes.

CHAPTER IX

East Flat Rock To Stanley

When I was read out for Stanley I was surprised and disappointed. A District superintendent in another District told me at conference he wanted me in his district and all was fixed. My new District Superintendent said he told all the preachers that, to get their vote to General Conference. The pastor that was leaving Stanley told me some wild stories about the people and work. When I got on the job I had to do a lot of praying. The pastor had reported the salary much higher than it was. I preached, prayed and visited the members. One of my Sunday School teachers did not belong to the church and didn't claim to be a Christian. I released him as teacher. He was a good honest man who treated his neighbor right. He was a merchant. I was in his store often and one day he called me in his office and showed me on his ledger the name of one of my members, who was a teacher, a steward and song leader; a business man who owed him quite a bill that had been standing fifteen years. He said, "I could sue him and get it but he is my neighbor." Such things hurt the church and the cause of Christ.

One of my members, a good widow lady who lived near the church had me and my family over

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for dinner one Sunday. While we were eating, someone knocked at the front door, and the lady went to answer. We finished eating and went into the living room where they were. After listening for a few moments, I butted in and said, "That is Russellite literature isn't it?" He said, "No, it is Judge Rutherford's." I replied, "It is all the same, this lady is a Christian, and belongs to my church and doesn't need that literature, now you take it and get out."

We had a great revival that year. The good Lord heard and answered prayer. It was a very good year, my salary was raised to what the former pastor had reported it to be!

The Sermon I Didn't Get To Preach

I was attending conference in Greensboro, (Nov. 5 to 9) and had promised a pastor that I would preach for him on Sunday, Nov. 9, at 11:00 A. M. at Summerfield. Rev. F. O. Dryman and I were being entertained in the home of Rev. and Mrs. Dwight Brown during the conference. Early that Sunday morning Brother Brown called upstairs and said I was wanted on the phone, long distance. I rushed down as soon as I could dress. It was from the parsonage at Stanley, to tell me the stork had visited the parsonage and left a fine baby boy. I had never ridden on an airplane up to that time, but if I could have gotten one I would have taken it to Stanley. I didn't preach that morning but

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made it home as quickly as possible. Found my wife and baby doing fine. Here was the new member of the parsonage family born on Sunday and during a Methodist Annual Conference. So we named him John Wesley. The appointments were read that day, and we were read out for First Methodist Church, Cherryville.

CHAPTER X

Stanley To Cherryville

John Wesley Groce was only ten days old when we moved to Cherryville. Here we found a six room parsonage, and a nice large church with a \$65,000.00 debt. We also found some very fine folks; some who loved the gospel and wanted it straight; they far out-weighed those who didn't. We had a fine group of praying people who could get a prayer through. Since all churches need a revival, we started to pray for our needs first. We held cottage prayer services in the homes of the people. Souls were saved in these prayer services, and then joined the church and went to work with us. The workers were revived and blessed. The Sunday School and Church services began to grow. We called a good, spirit-filled evangelist for our revival. The Lord blessed in a wonderful way. The church was revived, sinners were saved, back-sliders were reclaimed, and believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. We held Street Services on Saturdays in the lot next to the Post Office, and some of the other preachers in town helped us in these open air services.

Things started popping, because the Gospel uncovers sin, therefore worldly church members did not like it, and didn't want a revival. One of

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my stewards said he didn't like altar services because there was too much emotion. His fishing pal told me about the shines he cut when he caught a good fish. He could out-do anyone else then. A groceryman who was also a church official was selling beer. I explained the law of the Church to him. He said, "Mark me off," and got very angry. Another official would help take the offering on Sunday Morning and get drunk Sunday afternoon. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me." How can the devil's crowd run the church for the glory of God.

Times got harder; mills closed down and a lot of people were out of work. Many were living on relief. This, however, made it easier to reach people for the Lord and have revivals. More people would be saved at the prayer services or street services than you would ordinarily see saved in a 10 day revival. I held a revival in Gastonia during this time. The house was filled at night and many stood around the wall. I asked the Lord for a hundred souls before the meeting started. He reminded me of the Scripture: "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly more than you are able to ask . . ." I said, "Make it two hundred then Lord," and He made it more than three hundred for that one meeting. We were at Cherryville for two years and had two revivals each year. In all we took over two hundred new members into the

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church.

On June 1st, 1932, the stork visited us again and this time he brought us a beautiful baby girl. We named her Jennie Sue. We gained one and lost another. Our oldest daughter Margaret Lorena was married to J. G. Blackwood, a fine young man from our church there.

CHAPTER XI

Cherryville To China Grove

In the fall of 1932 we were transferred to First Methodist Church, China Grove, Salisbury District. There we found a great field of opportunity, so we rolled up our sleeves and went to work. The good Lord was with us. The devil knew I was against him so he had moved in before I got there. I knew he was powerful, and I also knew that my God who had never failed me was All Powerful.

Revivals only come in answer to prayer. We had two great revivals that year. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ uncovers sin therefore ungodly church members don't want to hear it. I had a run-in with one official and the District Superintendent that year because I preached Holiness in the Methodist Church. The District Superintendent said preaching Holiness would split the church. I told him that St. Paul said carnality was what split the church.

It is written: "Without Holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Be ye Holy for I am Holy." I hope that District Superintendent is in the presence of the Holy One. Uncle Buddie Robinson was accused of finding Holiness in the Bible where it wasn't. To this he said, "Bless God, if I can find

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it where it ain't, it looks like you could find it where it is."

At a steward meeting my salary was raised. At the next meeting one who was not present when my salary was raised, said he would have objected to the raising of my salary if he had been in the first meeting. I said, "Brother — I know you don't like me and I want to know why." He scratched his head, thought a moment, and said, "Well — well you are an extremist." I said, "Praise the Lord that is a great compliment, Paul was an extremist. Before his conversion he was an out and out extremist against the righteous, and afterwards he was an out and out extremist for the righteous, and the Lord." One saint said to another, "Is Holiness popular where you come from?" The other replied, "No, but it is where I am going."

As I look back I thank God I got in on Holiness and have preached it in spite of much opposition. I have held revivals in seventeen different states, and if I had not preached Holiness, I perhaps would have never been heard outside of Western North Carolina.

CHAPTER XII

Evangelism

In the fall of 1933 we were transferred to Ward Street and Archdale in High Point. Here we had four wonderful years. In 1934 High Point's first radio station WMFR was put on the air. We made contract for a 30 minute program each Sunday morning from 9:00 to 9:30, in which we put on "The Gospel Hour." Our theme song was "Have Thine Own Way Lord." This continued for over six years. God blessed our ministry in the churches and on the air. Our fan mail was very heavy. We married more couples and preached more funerals than ever before. On January 31, 1934, the stork found where we lived and brought us another fine baby boy. We named him Donald Ray.

In spite of opposition we succeeded in stopping both churches from having suppers to raise money for various things. Finances came easier than ever.

In the latter part of June, 1936, we held a three weeks tent meeting in Oak View section on the old Winston Road. We had quite a few saved and re-claimed. On the closing Sunday afternoon we organized the new Methodist Church with thirty members. In five weeks we had purchased a lot and closed in a 40 x 60 building. Without windows and only subflooring we had another revival. One of

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the old time kind, where sinners wept and prayed through at the altar. I was given an assistant pastor for the next conference year. A fine young man, Rev. Charles D. White who is now our conference secretary.

In 1937 I went into the evangelistic work and pastored our new Oak View Church. My near and dear friend, Dr. John R. Church, recommended and helped me to get more meetings than I could hold. The good Lord blessed our efforts as He did the little boy's loaves and fishes. He fed the multitudes.

We saw hundreds blessed at the altars. Sinners were saved, backsliders reclaimed and believers sanctified. In the next 14 years I held Church, Tent, and Camp Meetings in 16 States. After serving 4 years as pastor of Oak View I was appointed Conference Evangelist in which capacity I served for ten years.

I held 18 to 22 revivals a year, many of them were two weeks long and two services a day. There are quite a number of men preaching now that were saved or sanctified under my ministry. To God be all the praise. If time and space permitted I could relate some interesting and exciting experiences.

During these months and years Mrs. Groce suffered with arthritis and was getting worse each year until it was necessary for me to spend more time at home with her.

CHAPTER XIII

President Of A Campmeeting And A College

Several of us Western North Carolina Holiness Methodist preachers were attending Indian Springs Holiness Camp Meeting in August 1941. After praying together while there about starting a Holiness Camp in North Carolina, Rev. A. Burgess, Rev. Paul R. Rayle, Rev. C. E. Williams and I, felt that the Lord was leading in this way. On returning home we began to look for a location. We found a five-acre lot just out of High Point, (now in city limits) and bought it. In the summer of 1942 the first camp was held under a large tent. Dr. John R. Church was Evangelist and Joe Crouse and wife were in charge of music. From that time the camp has had growing pains. The Lord has blessed John Wesley Camp in a wonderful way. Thousands have attended, hundreds have been saved, reclaimed and sanctified. Many young people have attended and heard the full Gospel that they had never heard before. Preachers have been sanctified and gone out to preach the Gospel of full salvation.

I was president for first ten years. Then after

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Dr. John R. Church had served for five years, I served five more years as president. I am President Emeritus at this writing. The other three who prayed and worked with me in the beginning have all gone to their reward during the calendar year of 1963. John Wesley Camp has been supporting Miss Alice Day, a missionary in Kenya, Africa, for a number of years. May God continue to use John Wesley Camp to spread scriptural Holiness over the world.

During these months and years Mrs. Groce had suffered much with arthritis. Rev. D. A. Oakley, pastor of Oak View Methodist Church, died. I was appointed to finish out the conference year as pastor, and served for the next three years. During this time I held a tent meeting on Rural Route 68 in the Northwood Community, and organized another Methodist Church out there and named it Wesley Chapel.

After two weeks of critical illness in Burris Memorial Hospital in High Point, North Carolina, Mrs. Groce was relieved from her suffering and went to her eternal reward July 31, 1956. My children were all grown and away from home. I was left alone. In May 1956 I was elected President of People's Bible College, Greensboro, North Carolina (now John Wesley College.) It was a big job and I knew it. I had been on the board for a number of years. Rev. Jim Green was founder of the

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school and a dear friend of mine. I knew the school had done and was doing a great work. Many preachers and missionaries have gone from it to carry the full gospel to a lost world. To be the President of a Holiness school was a greater honor than I had ever expected to reach. I said, I felt it a greater honor to be the President of a Holiness Camp Meeting and a Holiness Bible School than to be the President of the United States.

Trusting God for help and guidance I took the presidency of John Wesley College June 31, 1956. That summer we built a three-story modern boys dormitory and had it ready for students by the opening of school in September. Rev. K. E. Temple was Vice President and had been with the school for more than twenty years. (He is still with the school.) He knew the ins and outs, so I leaned heavily upon him. He was always ready to help when I called upon him. He and his good wife have and are making a great sacrifice for the school. We had a great faculty, of good Godly men and women. Space does not permit me to mention all of them.

In 1958 we built a new modern High School building according to the requirements of the State of North Carolina.

I resigned as president of John Wesley College in August 1960, after spending a little over four glorious years with the faculty and students. I loved them all.

CHAPTER XIV

A Quiet Wedding

Through a mutual friend, Rev. R. O. Brown, I met Mrs. Ava Chitty of Quincy, Illinois. This was in March 1960. I was in the Baptist Hospital at Winston-Salem for surgery. The Lord heard and answered prayer, so I had a speedy recovery.

In August I flew to Quincy, Illinois and spent a week at Ava's home. September 1, I drove back to Quincy. We left Quincy Saturday, September 3, 1960, in a white Buick and arrived in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Sunday morning in time for Church. Monday was Labor Day. We went up on Pikes Peak by car and came down by Cog Train. We had a wonderful day. Tuesday morning we went to the Court House to get our marriage license. Two elderly ladies were in the office there, we asked them not to put it in the paper since we had run away and didn't want to be stopped. At 6:00 o'clock that evening, September 6, 1960, we were quietly married in the Methodist Church by the Pastor.

We had started on quite a long trip. Traveling is expensive. After we were married we saved \$10.00 a night with just one motel room instead of two.

We left Colorado Springs September 7, and went by the Royal Gorge, which was a beautiful sight. I had the address of my first school teacher

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who was living in Colorado. We looked her up and visited with her for about two hours. Before her marriage she was Miss Annie Goldsmith. She boarded with us and taught the Grade School (a one-teacher school) five miles north of Greer, South Carolina, and one mile from our home. She was only seventeen when she came there to teach. She got married and moved to Colorado. I had not seen her for sixty years. We all loved her. She did not live long after we stopped to see her.

We went on to Salt Lake City from there, and we crossed the Great Salt Flats. Ava's Uncle Olive Humphrey, lived at Yakima, Washington. We spent several days with him. We had a wonderful time. The whole family did all they could to make us enjoy our visit. Uncle Olive had hundreds of acres of pasture, and orchard land. We enjoyed one day of riding and fishing on the Columbia and Snake rivers.

When we left there we went down the Columbia River to Portland, Oregon, then to the West Coast, down the Coast to the Sea Lion Cave, a beautiful sight, then down through the giant Red Woods. We saw the tree with the driveway through it. I had never seen as many saw logs and as much lumber before. In many places the drive down the west coast was rather frightening. We were on the side of the Coastal Range Mountains, with the Pacific Ocean down at the foot. We held on to our traveling Psalm, the 121st. He has never failed us yet. Praise His Name.

CHAPTER XV

A Trip To Africa

We continued our trip down the West Coast through a part of California. Leaving the West Coast we headed East stopping at the Grand Canyons. This was very interesting and beautiful. From there we traveled through the Painted Deserts and on to Quincy, Illinois. We made our home in Quincy for about three years. I kept my home in High Point, where we would spend Christmas and sometime in the Summer. In 1962 we took a trip abroad for three months. We spent three weeks touring the Holy Land visiting many historical and interesting places. We drank water from Jacob's well, saw where Abraham offered Isaac, where John baptized Jesus in Jordan, and also where Jesus was born, where He lived, where He prayed in the Garden. We also saw where He was crucified, and buried, and the place of His ascension. We made a lot of slide pictures. From Athens, Greece, we flew to Marobia in Kenya, Africa. My daughter, Jennie Sue, and her husband, Dr. E. M. Steury with their two children, Cynthia Ruth and Jonathan David met us at the Air Port. We spent two months with them. During this time we went on a Safari in the Mossi Territory. Dr. Steury killed an ostrich, a torny, and a

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giant gazelle, also a Wildebeast. We had the ostrich and the gazelle hides tanned and shipped to us here. We visited two State Wild Life Parks and saw and made pictures of many wild animals. We went over into Tanganyika colony and visited Int-kilamanjaio, the highest mountain in Africa. They raised coffee and bananas way up on the side of this mountain.

We went to the Equator which was near Lake Victoria, then to Mombasi on the Indian Ocean. We had part, speaking through an interpreter, in Easter Services with a large crowd on top of Mount Manteo Mountain. We visited a number of Mission Schools and Mission Stations. Dr. Steury is in charge of Chryock Hospital at Tenwick Falls.

On June 6 we boarded a South African plane at Niarobia and flew to Zurick, Switzerland, from there to Lake Lacerne by train where we made headquarters for 4 days at Tivoli Hotel. From there we visited many interesting places by bus, boat and Cog train.

On June 10 we took a Jet Plane at Zurick on a 9 hour non-stop flight to New York. From there we flew to High Point Air Port through a terrible storm. The Good Lord did it again, we made it safely. To Him we give thanks.

My son, Walter, with his wife, Ruby, and son, Jerry, met us at the air port and took us to my home in High Point.

CHAPTER XVI

Back To North Carolina

About the middle of December 1962, we left Quincy, Illinois, for High Point, North Carolina, where we would spend Christmas. On our way we stopped at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, and looked at several houses that were for sale. None of them were just what we were looking for. Dr. J. W. Fowler, Superintendent of Lake Junaluska Methodist Assembly, showed us some lovely lots. We bought one, then after Christmas we went to Florida for vacation, camp meeting, fishing, and looking for a house plan. We selected one, making some changes, (three bed rooms, and two and a half baths.)

We gave Guy Fullbright of Lake Junaluska the contract to build. The house was started in March. We attended Annual Conference here at Junaluska, June 3 to 7.

Our furniture arrived from Quincy, Illinois, by Mayflower Moving Van on June 12, 1963. We both love the Mountains and we are very happy here in our new home. We have had a lot of company during these first six months on the lake.

Perhaps you wonder where my children are and what they are doing. Just start with the oldest and come down. Margaret is living in Lenoir,

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North Carolina. Her husband, Jim Blackwood, has been with the Chevrolet people there for a number of years. They have one daughter who is married and has three sons.

Walter and wife, Ruby, live at 405 Oak View Road, High Point, North Carolina. They have three children, two girls and a boy. The two girls are married, one of them has two girls and the other a boy, Jerry, is in Louisbury College.

Rev. William Wilbur and his wife, Frannie Mae, are living at Candler, North Carolina. He is Pastor of Mt. Moriah Wesleyan Methodist Church there. They have two girls and a boy.

Dr. John Wesley Groce and Joan, his wife, live in Tiffin, Ohio. He is a Science Teacher at Heidleburg College. They have one daughter.

Jennie Sue and her husband, Dr. E. M. Steury are on furlough now after spending four years as missionaries in Kenka, Africa. They have two children. The youngest was born in Africa. Donald Ray and Jamie, his wife, are living in Charlotte, North Carolina. They have two children, one girl and one boy. He is with the Champion Spark Plug Company. So, you see, I have six children living and one in Heaven. Twelve grand children, and six great-grand children. Do you wonder at us having swings, see-saws, slides and sand boxes in our back yard. I feel somewhat like the fellow who said, if he had known how much pleasure

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grand children were he would rather have had them first. God has wonderfully blessed our family. August 15, 1963, I was 75 years of age. I have been blessed with good health for which I give God the praise. He has never failed me yet. Though I have sometimes failed Him.

The 121st Psalm has been my traveling Psalm for 30 years. If I had my life to live over I would try to serve the Lord better, be a better Christian, a better preacher, a better husband, and a better father.

The End.

